User Needs Research

Generating Ideas for Products and Services

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User Needs Research

- Ethnographic studies
- Diary studies
- Unobtrusive observation
MIT's Digital Scholarship Study

Goal for Spring 2011 Digital Scholarship Study:

To study how new technologies and formats are having an impact on how MIT scholars find, use and share information for their study, research and publishing.
What research behavior might have been recorded in this photo?
Photos provided as artefacts for Digital Scholarship diary study.
Methodology

• Assign staff
  • Recruit participants
  • Schedule the interviews
  • Review the diaries
  • Conduct interviews
• Synthesize the data
• Analyze data
• Take action/incorporate into product/service
User needs research is qualitative; it’s not done for statistical validity, but instead for depth of knowledge about the individuals.

Quantitative studies are about “what”; qualitative studies are about “why.”

(Top) Quantitative studies such as surveys provide broad data about lots of people; (bottom) Qualitative studies like user needs studies provide deep knowledge about individuals.
Scholarly E-reading

“I’m looking forward to having [an e-reader] that works for academic articles.”

“Academic libraries should get together and find a way to create an e-reader interface, ideally with something not proprietary, so that [people can] borrow scholarly books.”

“[One university] allowed you to borrow certain scholarly books as e-books and view them online. Sometimes you just want a chapter and you can read it online. ... [I don’t] think [they] will ever replace paper books, but it creates more convenience, ... not having to carry things around.”
E-readers

“I don’t like reading on my laptop. I like the Kindle screen, ... [but not] the glare. I prefer reading in books.”

“I have a Kindle. I use it when I travel. It’s light. When I’m in one place for a while I read hardback books.”

In practice, the Kindle doesn’t work: it’s not fast enough ... “I like the materiality of book. I want to flip through pages, and I can’t do that with a Kindle. ... the black and white reverse for a second, which is annoying.” ... It doesn’t look like a book – “I have that kind of physical and emotional relationship.” ... The Kindle feels “confined. It makes me claustrophobic to read on a Kindle.” Meanwhile, “an iPad is just a big iPhone that doesn’t make phone calls, so I am not going to buy an iPad.” ...
For Further Reading


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Questions?

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MIT Libraries’ User Experience Group
http://bit.ly/kAUw6x